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Perceptions of HR Practices on Job Motivation and Work-life Balance: Mixed Drives and Outcomes

Abstract

Purpose: Based on regulatory focus theory and social exchange theory, this study explains how care service workers' job attitudes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and perceived organizational support, help form their promotion-focus or prevention-focus perceptions of firms' HR practices.

Design/methodology: A survey study of 709 residential care service workers was used to test the developed framework with structure equation modelling analysis.

Findings: The empirical results show that the adoption of HR practices in the British care service sector can simultaneously enhance workers' job motivation and help to correct their work-life imbalance, which have different effects on workers' job attitudes.

Research implications: When HR practices are adopted, it can create both promotion- and prevention-focused perceptions from the workers' perspective. The mixed perceptions about HR practices trigger both perceptions of job motivation and perceptions of work-life imbalance, that can then lead to different outcomes with regard to job attitudes.

Practical implication: This study helps practitioners apply HR practices suitably, to certain types of employees in order to drive positive, rather than negative impacts. It is important for managers in the care service industry to take into account the conditions that determine the impacts of HR practices on workers' job attitudes when deciding to adopt HR practices.

Originality: This study contributes to the management literature by providing empirical evidence of the critical role played by job motivation and work-life imbalance in the HR practices-job attitudes link.

Keywords: HR Practices; Regulatory Focus; Social Exchange; Care Service.

“High-involvement/-commitment/-performance human resource management practices/work systems (HR practices, hereafter) refer to a set of approaches that are geared toward increasing workers’ ability, motivation and opportunities (Doucet et al., 2015; Marescaux et al., 2013; McClean and Collins, 2011; Stirpe et al., 2015). Though recent research highlights that the adoption and perception of HR practices has a mixture of positive and negative outcomes for workers (*see more in* Godard, 2001; Harley et al., 2010; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Ramsay et al., 2000), it is not clear what determines the mixed impacts of HR practices. In addition, the adoption and perception of HR practices do not produce the same results as the former is implemented by organizations’ managers, while the latter refers to the subjective feelings of employees (Nishil et al., 2008). The perceptions of HR practices are important because before HR practices can exert their desired effects on employees, they have to be perceived and interpreted subjectively by the employees (Nishil et al., 2008). Thus, our study focus on investigating the underlying theoretical stand of perceptions of HR practices.

Based on the implications and insights drawn from regulatory focus theory and social exchange theory, an integrative framework was proposed. The framework was tested by using survey data obtained from 709 residential care service workers in the UK. The study *advances theory in HR practices* by making two key contributions to the literature.

First, it explains the mixed impact of perceptions of HR practices on workers and what determines the nature of this impact (positive or negative) on the workers’ job attitudes. Although many prior researchers have acknowledged this paradox of HR practices (Harley et al., 2007; Mackie et al., 2001; Ramsay et al., 2000), no prior research seems to have been carried out in this area. The framework clarifies that these mixed outcomes result from the promotion-focused or prevention-focused workers’ perceptions that HR practices can

generate. This, thereby, opens up a new path for future research (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013).

Second, previous researchers have investigated the indirect effects of perceptions of HR practices on workers' job attitude (Paré and Tremblay, 2007). None of these previous studies has examined whether job motivation and work-life imbalance play a critical role in transmitting perceptions of HR practices to workers' job attitudes, even though there is independent evidence to suggest that both factors are important by-products of perceptions of HR practices and triggers of workers' job attitudes (Combs et al., 2006; Ergeneli et al., 2010; White et al., 2003). Both job motivation and work-life imbalance reflect how care service workers' normally feel and experienced when they wish to pursue their goals of become excellent care service workers (Atchley, 1996; Stone and Wiener, 2001; Straker and Atchley, 1999). Thus, this study contributes to further understanding one of the most HR concerns - the impacts of perceptions HR practices.

Theoretical Background

To explain why HR practices might cause mixed outcomes regarding workers' job attitudes, a new theoretical framework that integrates regulatory focus theory and social exchange theory was proposed. *Regulatory focus theory* operates on the basic principle that people embrace pleasure and avoid pain, which posits the existence of two distinct motivational orientations: promotion-focused and prevention-focused (Brockner and Higgins, 2001). The *promotion-focused orientation* centers on the need for growth, development and advancement (i.e. to embrace pleasure). *Prevention-focused orientation* centers on the need to prevent negative outcomes (i.e. to avoid pain). Depending on individuals' values and beliefs about given situations, they are likely to adopt one dominant motivational orientation when pursuing their goals (Higgins, 1997). Thus, regulatory focus theory has long been used by management

researchers to understand motivation behaviors in workplace settings (Sacramento et al., 2013).

Social exchange theory, on the other hand, delineates how individuals reciprocate what they receive from others (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Gould-Williams *et al.* (Gould-Williams, 2007; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005) suggest that social exchange theory can be used to predict the outcomes of firms' HR practices with regard to their workers' behavior. When workers perceive that the firms' HR practices contribute toward their well-being (i.e. they fulfil their aspirations), they will reciprocate by adopting positive job attitudes, and vice versa.

According to regulatory focus theory, when firms adopt HR practices to enhance their workers' ability, motivation and opportunities, not every worker perceives these undertakings as being designed to assist them to succeed and obtain rewards. In fact, several studies point out that some workers may view HR practices as extra duties and obligations that they must perform (Ramsay *et al.*, 2000; White *et al.*, 2003). In this sense, workers can have either promotion-focused or prevention-focused perceptions of their firm's adoption of HR practices. Based on social exchange theory, it is argued that workers, who use a promotion-focused orientation to view HR practices as helping them to achieve their goals, can reciprocate with positive behavior toward that firm. In contrast, workers who use a prevention-focused orientation to view HR practices as adding new responsibilities and obligations to their current job demands, tend to reciprocate by displaying negative behavior toward that firm.

Figure 1 depicts our research model. The central assumption is that the perceptions of HR practices will trigger both job motivation and work-life imbalance. This will cause workers to adopt different job attitudes. Hypotheses are developed as follows.

“Insert Figure 1 about Here”

Hypothesis Development

HR Practices

Over the last few decades, researchers have generally agreed that HR practices mean a set of approaches that aim to promote workers' ability, motivation and opportunities, although researchers disagree about the precise definition of the key HR practices (Jiang *et al.*, 2012; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; McClean and Collins, 2011; Paré and Tremblay, 2007; Prieto and Santana, 2012). In this study, we selected four specific types of HR practices; they are recognition, fair rewards, empowerment, and competence development. *Recognition*, according to many studies, is a fundamental driver of human behavior, which emphasizes the provision of signals to workers in appreciating the quality of their work and achievements (Paré and Tremblay, 2007; Yang, 2012). *Fair reward* refers to workers feeling that their job outcomes, such as compensation conditions, performance evaluation, and job assignments, are fairly judged and rewarded accordingly (Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Yang, 2012). *Empowerment* refers to providing workers with opportunities to make their own decisions with regard to their job-related activities and to bear the responsibility for these decisions (Chebat and Kollias, 2000). Finally, *competence development* practices, such as training and mentoring, focus on "both improving the productivity of existing workers and sending workers the signal that decision makers are willing to invest in them beyond the short-term return" (Graham and Tarbell, 2006; Paré and Tremblay, 2007). We choose these four types of HR practices based on both theoretical and contextual perspectives.

As theoretically discussed above about the regulatory focus theory positing two distinct motivational orientations: promotion-focused and prevention-focused (Brockner and Higgins, 2001). In this study, we refer to those HR practices that are designed to fulfill the needs of the workers as promotion-focused HR practices, consisting of two specific approaches:

competence development and empowerment; and as prevention-focussed HR practices, consisting of two specific practices: fair reward and recognition.

From contextual perspective, we choose these four types of HR practices based on the acknowledgement of their importance from prior studies about care service industry. For example, Straker and Atchley (1999) found in their interviews that an employee recognition program (recognition practices) can enhance care service workers retention. In terms of fair reward practice, Atchley (1996) found that care service workers are often underpaid in conjunction with tough jobs that demand both physical and mental resources. Another study, by Kemper et al. (2008), that analyzed 3,468 care service workers' responses to open ended questions about recommendations for improving their job, found that a fair reward system, such as linking wages, benefits or government reimbursement to performance, can improve performance and promote employee retention. For empowerment practices, Stacey (2005) interviewed 33 residential care workers and found that giving employees greater control over their tasks and make work-related decision can enhance their dignity in the workplace. Finally, studies have found that training and skills development (competence development) can not only provide care service worker with the skills and tools necessary to succeed in their jobs, but also improve the employees' sense of fulfillment and career prospects (e.g. Atchley, 1996; Wilner and Wyatt, 1999).

Job Motivation and Work-Life Imbalance

Studies of HR practices have often discussed their impact on two possible outcomes: job motivation and work-life imbalance, particularly in the care service sector (Atchley, 1996; Stone and Wiener, 2001; Straker and Atchley, 1999). *Job motivation* is defined as the motivation that arises from the pleasure that individuals obtain from their job and their resulting greater likelihood to engage in job-related tasks willingly (Hackman and Lawler III, 1971; Tietjen and Myers, 1998). *Work-life balance/imbalance* is defined as the

proper/improper prioritization of one's responsibilities at home (one's personal life) and at work (Ergeneli *et al.*, 2010; Gregory and Milner, 2009). In this research, we theorize job motivation to reflect employees' feeling and beliefs when taking promotion-focused oriented view, while work-life imbalance reflect employees' feeling and beliefs when taking prevention-focused oriented view, on firms' adoption of HR practices. We further explain below.

In the context of the care service industry, traditionally, research confirms the assumption that the adoption of HR practices can generate job motivation because workers often believe that HR practices provide opportunities for them to grow and achieve their job-related goals (Harley *et al.*, 2007; Harley *et al.*, 2010). Drawing on regulatory focus theory, workers' job motivation represents the outcome whereby workers adopt a promotion-focused point of view to interpret firms' HR practices, while work-life imbalance represents the outcome whereby workers adopt a prevention-focused orientation to view firms' HR practices. Workers with a strong promotion-focused orientation desire growth, development and accomplishment. In this case, workers consider that firms provide them with opportunities to reach their desired end-state when firms adopt HR practices. In general, workers with a promotion-focused orientation tend to find their job more enjoyable and be more willing to engage in job-related tasks when firms adopt HR practices. Thus, HR practices lead to higher job motivation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Workers' perceptions of HR practices positively affect their job motivation.

In contrast, workers with a strong prevention-focused orientation desire security and protection. As White *et al.* (2003) indicate, HR practices often make additional demands of workers, beyond their original job descriptions. Thus, workers with a prevention-focused orientation are likely to view these demands as an extra burden and stress. For example, when workers receive positive acknowledgement of their work achievements and are given more

rewards in relation to their job outcomes, they may feel that they must continuously perform their job at a higher level. This tends to require more time and effort from them. Similarly, when workers receive further training and development with regard to their work-related skills, and are offered greater autonomy to make work-related decisions, they may feel that they need to pay more attention to the details about their work and avoid making mistakes. This might take more time away from their personal life. In addition, despite the implementation of HR practices, many care service providers are still experiencing difficulties related to worker retention, largely due to work-related stress, which can lead to strong perceptions of work-life imbalance (Colton and Roberts, 2007). Therefore, firms' adoption of HR practices can lead to workers' perceptions of a work-life imbalance, when workers have a strong prevention-focused orientation. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Workers' perceptions of HR practices positively affect their work-life imbalance.

Job Attitudes

Job attitudes, on the other hand, refer to workers' evaluation of their feelings toward, beliefs about, and attachment to their job (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Job attitudes, theoretically, are often linked to three distinct measurements: job satisfaction, organizational commitment and perceived organizational support (Dalal, et al., 2012; Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Research context-wise, job satisfaction (e.g. Kemper et al., 2008; Straker and Atchley, 1999), organizational commitment (e.g. Straker and Atchley, 1999; Top et al., 2013) and perceived organizational supports (e.g. Atchley, 1996; Wilner and Wyatt, 1999) are often employed by researchers to assess care service workers' feelings toward, beliefs about, and attachment to their job.

Job satisfaction is the affective attachment to one's job, a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job, or affective feelings toward one's job (Harley et al., 2007; Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Job satisfaction is one of the most widely-

studied attributes of workers' behavior toward their work. Numerous studies emphasize the importance of identifying the determinants of job satisfaction, such as management style and culture, working environment, working hours, and wages (Tietjen and Myers, 1998). *Organizational commitment*, another important job attitude, refers to a worker's positive feelings, identification, and emotional attachment to the organization (Fullerton, 2003; Hansen et al., 2003). Meyer et al. (1993) suggest that workers whose experiences within the organization are consistent with their expectations and satisfy their basic needs to develop a stronger affective attitude will work harder toward the attainment of their organizational goals. Thus, employees who are affectively committed strongly identify with the goals of the organization and desire to remain a part of it. Finally, *perceived organizational support* refers to workers' perceptions concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al. 1997). Experts suggest that firms that engage in certain activities, such as rewarding increased employee work effort and contribution, meeting employees' socio-emotional needs, providing favorable job conditions, and so on, can trigger their workers' sense of belongingness to the company and enhance their belief that they are receiving support from the firm (Su et al., 2009).

Social exchange theory can be used to predict the outcomes of firms' HR practices on their workers' behavior (Gould-Williams, 2007; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005). Drawing on social exchange theory, it is argued that workers with higher job motivation are more likely to reciprocate with positive job attitudes. When workers perceive that the firms' HR practices contribute toward their well-being (Kooij et al., 2013), they tend to reciprocate by adopting positive job attitudes (i.e. they fulfil their aspirations), and vice versa. This is because job motivation can be considered a positive emotion (Pinder, 2008). Straker and Atchley (1999) hint that care service workers' job attitudes might be enhanced if organizations can find ways to improve their job motivation. Thus, workers who gain these

positive emotions from their work tend to feel obliged to return the favor by feeling more satisfied by their job, wishing to maintain their membership of the firm and feeling that the firm cares about their well-being. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3a/b/c: Job motivation positively affects job attitudes (job satisfaction/organizational commitment/perceived organizational support).

The pressure arising from work and family is sometimes described as mutually incompatible (Kahn et al., 1964), causing regular compromises on the part of workers. Therefore, the conflict between individuals' work and non-work life has long been documented as a source of negative work-related emotion (Ergeneli *et al.*, 2010; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001). Drawn from the social exchange theory (Gould-Williams, 2007; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005), it is argued that workers who perceive a stronger work-life imbalance are more likely to reciprocate with negative job attitudes. Workers who believe that their perceived work-life imbalance is caused by their job demands are more likely to reciprocate by experiencing job dissatisfaction, a lack of organization commitment, and a perception that their firms cares less about their well-being. This is because the workers reciprocate with either positive or negative emotions which they believe are caused by their work, associated with the appropriate job attitudes. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a/b/c: Work-life imbalance negatively affects job attitudes (job satisfaction/organizational commitment perceived organizational support).

Research Method

Study Context: Care Service Sector

In the case of the care service sector, workers face tasks and decisions related to elderly and disadvantaged individuals (people with disabilities, mental health problems, or learning difficulties), which often involve a high level of stress and require substantial cognitive and

psychological resources (Berg and Frost, 2005; Straker and Atchley, 1999). Moreover, the nature of the work in the care service industry involves caring for individuals who are unable to care for themselves, by providing assistance with daily living tasks (McGregor, 2007). As Stacey (2005) points out, this kind of work is usually physically demanding and sometimes challenging. Due to the high stress work environment and relatively labor-intensive nature of this work, this industry usually suffers from workers' negative job attitudes (Kemper *et al.*, 2008; McGregor, 2007).

Prior studies on this industry context have suggested that the adoption of HR practices would improve the above situation. Straker and Atchley (1999) find in their interviews that a worker recognition program can enhance worker retention. They show that workers who are recognized by their employers for their contribution toward providing caring services are more likely to feel satisfied with their job. This is because they will feel that their capabilities, efforts and performance are being acknowledged by the organization, and that they play an important role within it.

Furthermore, Kemper *et al.* (2008), who analyze 3,468 care workers' responses to open-ended questions about recommendations for improving their job, find that a fair reward system, such as linking wages, benefits or government reimbursement to performance, tends to improve performance and promote worker retention. This perception of fairness can influence the workers' belief that they are being treated and rewarded properly, according to their efforts and performance. Consequently, they are more likely to become satisfied with their job and have a stronger sense of organizational support.

Taken together, HR practices seem to be associated overwhelmingly with positive job attitudes in the care service industry. However, some studies present contradictory findings. For example, Berg and Frost (2005) show that HR practices yield few benefits for care service workers. As Harley *et al.* (2010) suggest, HR practices may not have universally

positive or negative outcomes, but these may depend on specific circumstances that reinforce particular outcomes. This research is devoted to further extending people's understanding of the mixed impact of HR practices in this sector.

Survey

This study employs a cross-sectional questionnaire survey design. The UK care industry can be divided into child and adult social care services (Prospects, 2012). This research selected adult social care services, particularly residential care, for two reasons. First, according to a report issued in 2010, the residential care sector, representing 48% (1.21 million) of the independent sector jobs in the adult social care service category, was the fastest growing part of the sector, due to the ageing population in the UK (Care, 2010). Second, this type of care service provider constantly reports difficulties associated with staff recruitment and retention, despite the improvement in HR practices in recent years (McGregor, 2007; Panorama, 2011).

A questionnaire was sent randomly to 2,050 workers in UK residential care organizations in 2011. 709 useable responses were returned (a 34.58% response rate). 80.4% of the respondents were female, which reflects the gender imbalance among workers in the UK care industry (Ashcroft, 2014). Although the sample compromised 14 nationalities, 95% of the respondents were identified as British (95%). The ages of the respondents spanned 50 years, with the youngest being 19 years old and the oldest 69 years old, resulting in an average age of 42.63 years old. The tenure of the respondents ranged from less than a year to 29 years, with an average length of service of 9.89 years.

Multi-item, Likert-type scales were used to measure the relevant constructs (see Appendix 1). A second-order construct with twelve item scales were taken from (Paré and Tremblay, 2007) to measure perceptions of recognition, fair reward, competence development and empowerment. We adapted the two items of job motivation scale developed by Hackman and Lawler III (1971) to measure workers' job motivation. The four item scale

related to work-life imbalance was taken from Hill et al. (2001). For job attitudes, we adapted the four item scale developed by Su *et al.* (2009) to measure workers' perceptions of organizational support. The four item scale related to affective commitment was adopted from Meyer and Allen (1991) to assess the workers' perceptions of organizational commitment. The five item scale related to job satisfaction was taken from Price and Mueller (1986) to measure workers' overall job satisfaction.

Finally, several control variables were included. First, the qualifications of workers have been shown to influence their job motivation (Ilgen and Pulakos, 1999). Second, the age of workers has also been shown to impact on their perception of work-life imbalance (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001). Thirdly, workers' work experience and gender difference have been shown to impact on job attitudes (Duffy et al., 1998; Grönlund, 2007; Wright and Bonett, 2002). Therefore, workers' qualifications were used to control for perceived job motivation, workers' age to control for perceived work-life imbalance, and workers' work experience to control for perceived job attitudes. Descriptive statistics related to the variables are shown in Table 1.

“Insert Table 1 about Here”

The following steps were taken to ensure the validation and reliability of the data. First, because the data were collected from the same sources, and the same respondents answered the dependent variable as answered the independent one, this study may be prone to common method bias. We followed the suggestions from Podsakoff and colleagues (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) to ensure that common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern for this study. Initially, we controlled the common method bias using procedural remedies recommend by Podsakoff and colleagues (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff et al., 2012; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). In particular, the data collection process was organized in a way that would assure the anonymity and confidentiality of the

respondents, emphasized that there are no right or wrong answers, covered the items for the independent variables before the dependent variables, and trimmed the scales by removing overlapping items. Furthermore, we also followed the suggestion of Chang et al. (2010) and Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) to use multiple statistical remedies to ensure that common method bias is not an issue for this study. In particular, we performed Harman's single factor and latent common factor (controlling for the effects of an unmeasured latent methods factor) analysis (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). The results of Harman's single factor analysis indicated that a single method factor does not explain the majority of the variance (the highest single variance extracted from the data is 37.42%). We, then, performed latent common method factor analysis by loading all of the items onto one common latent factor. We constrained the measurement factor loadings to be equal to minimize identification problem (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The result suggests that the significance of the structured parameters in both with and without latent common latent factor are to remain intact. Moreover, we squared the value of the common latent factor loading and the results demonstrate that the highest single variance extracted from the data is 14.67%, which does not explain the majority of the variance (Liang et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2003). The results from both statistical remedies suggested that common method bias should not be a concern for this study.

Second, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) was calculated to assess the possibility of multicollinearity (O'Brien, 2007). The results suggest that all VIF values are below three. Since a VIF value of greater than 10 would indicate that multicollinearity poses a serious problem (Hair et al., 2010), it is confident that multicollinearity is not a serious problem in this analysis. Finally, the validity and reliability of the construct were assessed. Initially, the fit among a series of confirmatory factor analysis models was compared to determine the best-fit model (see Table 2).

“Insert Table 2 about Here”

According to the thresholds value guideline of Hair *et al.* (2010) and Byrne (2010) for the comparative fit index (CFI), normal fit index (NFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), our hypothesized model exhibited the best fit ($X^2 = 883.39$; $df = 278$; $X^2/df = 3.18$; $p = .00$, CFI = .95; GFI = .91, NFI = .93; RMSEA = .06). Thus, the discriminant validity of our constructs is confirmed. The value of the convergent reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were then calculated. As shown in Table 1, the value of the CR is greater than .70 for all constructs, so the construct reliability is confirmed (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The value of the AVE for all constructs exceeds the .50 benchmark (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Thus, the convergent validity can be established (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Finally, to ascertain the discriminant validity further, the square root value of the AVE of each construct was calculated and found that the resulting value for each construct was greater than all of its correlations with other constructs (see Table 1), supporting the establishment of discriminant validity (Chin and Marcoulides, 1998). Overall, the results suggest that the measurement scales are satisfactorily reliable and valid.

Findings and Analysis

To test the hypotheses, a structural equation model was estimated using SPSS AMOS software (Byrne, 2010). A maximum-likelihood estimation was performed to test the path relationship among HR practices, job motivation, work-life imbalance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived organizational support, simultaneously ($X^2 = 1145.71$; $df = 375$; $X^2/df = 3.06$; GFI = .90; NFI = .91; $p = .00$, CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05). The results are presented in Figure 2.

“Insert Figure 2 Here”

The estimation results show that all path relationships are significant. The HR practices have positive effects on the workers' perceptions of job motivation ($\beta = .94, p < .01$) and work-life imbalance ($\beta = .55, p < .01$), respectively. Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported. The results also suggest that the workers' perceptions of job motivation positively affect their job satisfaction ($\beta = .72, p < .01$), organizational commitment ($\beta = .82, p < .01$) and perceived organizational support ($\beta = .88, p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported. Finally, the workers' perceptions of work-life imbalance negatively affect their job satisfaction ($\beta = -.14, p < .01$), organizational commitment ($\beta = -.11, p < .01$) and perceived organizational support ($\beta = -.12, p < .01$) were found in support of hypothesis 4.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Prior studies on the impact of perceptions of HR practices have produced inconsistent findings. In this study, regulatory focus theory and social exchange theory have been employed to explain why perceptions of HR practices produce mixed outcomes. The hypotheses were tested by conducting a survey study of 709 UK residential care service workers. The results and their implications extend the academic literature in the relevant fields and have significant managerial implications.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

First is the mixed impact of perceptions of HR practices. Previous theoretical models offered contradictory predications regarding the perceptions of HR practices (Harley *et al.*, 2010; Mackie *et al.*, 2001; White *et al.*, 2003). One of the key contributions of this study is that it is possible for perceptions of HR practices to have mixed impacts on workers' attitudes simultaneously. The theory developed from this research suggests that when HR practices are perceived and interpreted by employees, it can create both promotion- and prevention-

focused perceptions from their perspective. This is because workers' perceptions of HR practices can enhance their abilities, motivations and opportunities, at the same time demand that they make additional efforts outside their current job description. These mixed perceptions about HR practices trigger both perceptions of job motivation and perceptions of work-life imbalance that can then lead to different outcomes with regard to job attitudes. Thus, the result explains why prior studies found mixed impacts in this respect (Godard, 2001; Harley et al., 2010; Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Ramsay et al., 2000). Workers who value their present job opportunity highly are more likely to consider HR practices using a promotion-focused orientation. This study, therefore, offers a new and potentially powerful perspective on our understanding of the mixed impact of perceptions of HR practices. This particularly helps practitioners adopt HR practices suitably to certain types of employees in order to drive positive rather than negative impacts.

Second, the understanding of the connections between perceptions of HR practices and workers' job attitudes is advancing. Although previous investigations of the perceptions of HR practices-job attitudes link have studied many different factors related to it (Paré and Tremblay, 2007; Yang, 2012), none has so far examined factors such as job motivation and work-life imbalance. This study contributes to the management literature by providing empirical evidence of the critical role played by job motivation and work-life imbalance in the link between perceptions of HR practices and job attitudes. This study shows that perceptions of HR practices can trigger workers' perceptions of their job motivation and work-life imbalance. The former will lead to workers' positive job attitudes while the latter will lead to negative ones. These findings suggest that, while experts generally believe that perceptions of HR practices form part of the solution to management challenges, such as low job satisfaction (Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Paré and Tremblay, 2007), perceptions of HR practices can also form part of the problem, thus posing further challenges (White *et al.*,

2003). Therefore, managers should closely monitor the perceptions of HR practices into their business operations. For example, if managers find that workers generally perceive that HR practices merely increase their job demands without enhancing their job motivation, then managers should terminate or revise the context of the HR practices accordingly.

Finally, the theory developed in this study provides a new way of understanding the effects of perceptions of HR practices in the care service industry. Previous scholars describe the benefits of perceptions of HR practices in this industry (Atchley, 1996; Straker and Atchley, 1999), but few have examined this predication empirically and in the context of improving workers' job attitudes (exceptions such as Harley *et al.*, 2007; Harley *et al.*, 2010). This study identifies the conditions that determine the impacts of perceptions of HR practices on workers' job attitudes. This finding is important because, whereas past research discussed the importance of promoting HR practices generally, this study indicates that it is important for managers in the care service industry to take these conditions into account what HR practices to adopt.

Limitations and Further Research

Like any other research, there are some limitations in this study due to the research design. These limitations, in turn, may yield opportunities for future research. First, the cross-sectional design of this study does not allow any definite conclusions to be drawn about the causal processes and effects of HR practices over time. Moreover, the survey methodology, that measures a single point in time, limits the conclusion about the perceptions of workers. As suggested by the literature, although the vast majority of structural equation model studies used cross-sectional data, researchers still need to acknowledge that a set of relationships among the variables occurs simultaneously, rather than being a purely causal relationship (Holbert and Stephenson, 2002). Given that the relationship between HR practices and job

attitudes develops over time, future researchers might employ a longitudinal research design empirically to confirm this causality.

Second, the research design that involved a single respondent to complete the entire survey questionnaire opens the possibility of common method bias. Even though we follow the procedural remedies recommended by Podsakoff and colleagues (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986) to control common method bias, and the results from our statistical remedies suggest that common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern, this still raised the question of how valid is it for an individual to assess its own perception of organization's HR practices and responses to his/her job attitudes. Further research might utilize a secondary data-based or multi-data sources research design to overcome this limitation. Furthermore, one of the statistical remedies that we adopted in this research to detect common method bias is common latent factor analysis, which has been reported to have several disadvantage such as identification problem (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). If the single respondent research approach is unavoidable, future researchers may want to include a marker variable (a theoretically unrelated variable) in the survey design, because marker variable analysis is considered to be a better tool to detect potential common method bias (Richardson et al., 2009; Simmering et al., 2015; Williams *et al.*, 2003).

Finally, the organizational affiliation of the respondents was not controlled. This is because, when care workers were contacted, most of them stated an unwillingness to disclose the name of their employers. Therefore, this question was removed from the survey. However, this concern may not be an issue for this study, as previous studies suggest that employees' behavior is more likely to reflect their perceptions of firms' HR practices (Alfes et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2009). Nevertheless, research in the future may collaborate with companies in the care industry to take organizational factors into consideration or collect

information from multiple respondents in each firm (including both managers and care workers) to reduce this limitation.

Despite these limitations, this research contributes toward advancing our understanding of what and how HR practices can create mixed impacts on job attitudes. This new understanding provides practical implications for managers in the care service industry. Other industries, particularly labor-intensive ones, may find it useful to consult these practical implications.

Reference

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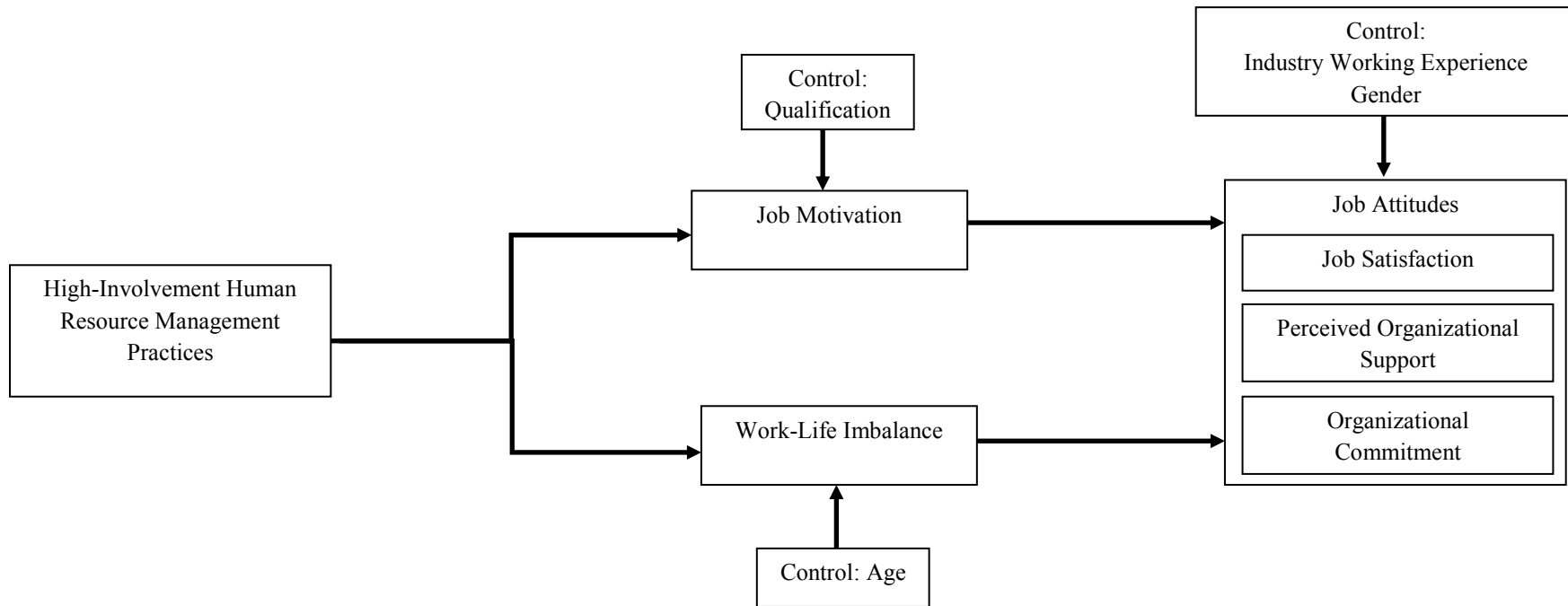
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Figure 1: Research Model



Notes:
The dotted lines represent moderation path.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	S.D.	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
X1. Age(Log)	1.61	.14	---	---	---									
X2. Gender	.80	.40	---	---	.03	---								
X3. Industry Working Experience	.59	1.01	---	---	.47*	.05	---							
X4. Qualification	.63	.48	---	---	.18*	.08*	.22*	---						
X5. High-Involvement HR Practices	4.23	1.17	.85	.59	.11*	.07	.09*	.03	.77					
X6. Perceived Organizational Support	4.15	1.53	.90	.75	.06	.02	.06	-.03	.66*	.87				
X7. Job Satisfaction	4.54	1.28	.87	.68	.07	.03	.11*	.05	.53*	.42*	.82			
X8. Organizational Commitment	3.74	1.48	.88	.71	.10*	-.01	.10*	-.02	.58*	.60*	.46*	.84		
X9. Job Motivation	5.88	1.15	.87	.76	.14*	.16*	.11*	.07	.36*	.26*	.29*	.21*	.87	
X10. Work-Life Imbalance	4.86	1.47	.87	.71	.14*	.07	.09*	.01	.47*	.33*	.20*	.26*	.28*	.84

Notes:

N = 709; *p < .05

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) square root are show in bold on the correlation matrix diagonal

S.D. = Standard deviation

Gender: Male = 0; Female = 1

Qualification: With specific qualification = 0; Without specific qualification = 1

Industry Working Experience = less than 10 years = 0, 11~20 years = 1, above 21 years = 2

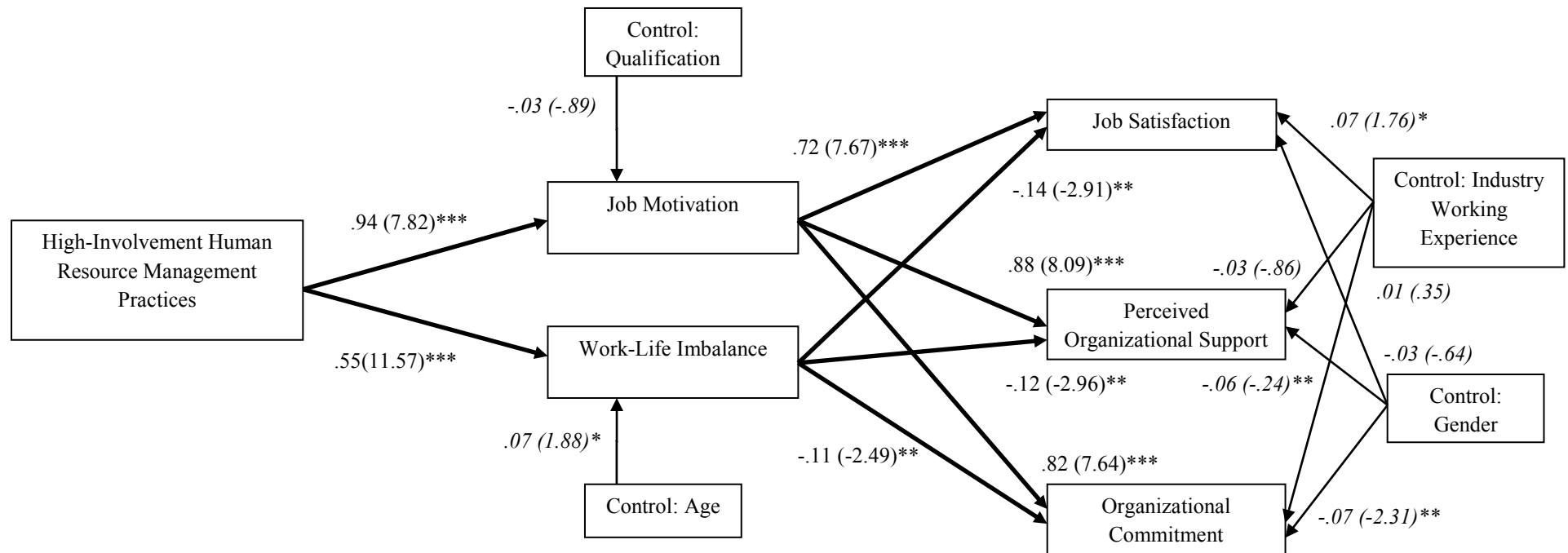
Table 2: Model Fit

Factor Structure Model	X^2	df	X^2/df	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	p-value
6 Factor Model: HRM, MO, WLB, JS, OS, OC	883.39	278	3.18	.95	.91	.93	.06	.00
5 Factor Model: HRM, MO, WLB, JS, (OS, OC)	1642.28	283	5.80	.89	.84	.87	.08	.00
4 Factor Model: HRM, MO, WLB, (JS, OS, OC)	2234.10	287	7.78	.84	.78	.83	.10	.00
3 Factor Model : HRM, (MO, WLB), (JS, OS, OC)	2823.36	290	9.74	.80	.75	.78	.11	.00
2 Factor Model: (HRM, MO, WLB), (JS, OS, OC)	3541.13	292	12.13	.74	.70	.73	.13	.00
1 Factor Model: (HRM, MO, WLB, JS, OS, OC)	3988.00	293	13.61	.70	.68	.70	.13	.00

Notes: X^2 = Chi-Square; df = Degree of Freedom; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; NFI = Normal Fit Index; Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

HRM = High-Involvement HR Practices; MO = Job Motivation; WLB = Work-Life Imbalance; JS = Job Satisfaction; OS = Perceived Organizational Support; OC = Organizational Commitment

Figure 2: Research Model



Notes: ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .10

Standardised Coefficients are reported with t-value in parathions (Normal Font – Hypothesized relationship; Italic Font – Control Variable)

Fit Statistics: Chi-Square (χ^2) = 1145.71, p = .00***, Degree of Freedom (df) = 375, χ^2/df = 3.06, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .94, Root Mean Square Error (RMSEA) = .05; Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = .90; Normal Fit Index (NFI) = .91

Qualification: With specific qualification = 0; Without specific qualification = 1

Industry Working Experience = less than 10 years = 0, 11~20 years = 1, above 21 years = 2

Gender: Male = 0; Female = 1

Appendix 1: Measurement

Measurement	Loading
Perceptions of HR Practices	
<i>Recognition</i>	
Employees' suggestions are seriously taken into consideration.	.83
My supervisor(s) regularly congratulates employees' efforts.	.84
When an employee does high quality work, his colleagues show their appreciation.	.83
<i>Fair Reward</i>	
I estimate my salary as being fair compared to colleagues.	.78
My salary is fair in comparison with similar jobs elsewhere.	.84
My colleagues consider that their pay level adequately reflects their level of responsibility in the organization.	.80
<i>Competence Development</i>	
Employees can develop their skills to increase their chance of promotion.	.85
Training courses and relevant qualifications are encouraged by my manager.	.88
I am able to apply my new skills in my work.	.83
Managers encourage employees to use their new abilities and skills in their daily work.	.80
<i>Empowerment</i>	
Employees are able to organize with own work.	.85
In my team, employees have considerable freedom regarding the way they carry out their work.	.77
Perceived Organizational Support	
My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	.86
My organization really cares about my well-being.	.89
My organization values my contribution to its well-being.	.93
My organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.	---*
Job Satisfaction	
Overall, how satisfied are you with the work itself of your job?	.93
Overall, how satisfied are you with your co-workers?	---*
Overall, how satisfied are you with the supervision?	.76
Overall, how satisfied are you with the promotional opportunities?	.78
Overall, how satisfied are you with the salary?	---*
Organizational Commitment	
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.66
I feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	---*
I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.	.91
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	.93
Job Motivation	
I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do my job well.	.79
Doing my job well increases my feeling of self-esteem.	.92
Work-Life Imbalance	
When I am on holiday, I am able to separate myself from work and enjoy myself. (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)	.90
I have enough time away from my job to maintain adequate work and personal/family life balance. (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)	.91
How easy is it for you to balance the demands of work with your personal/family life? (1 = very easy, 7 = very difficult)	.69

Note:

Factor loadings are standardized

*Items dropped